

**TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD**

MEETING MINUTES

July 20, 2017

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BELMONT, MA

2017 SEP -5 AM 8:30

Present: Elisabeth Allison, Chair; Barbara Fiacco, Vice Chair; Raffi Manjikian; Charles Clark; Karl Haglund

Staff: Jeffrey Wheeler, Senior Planner; Spencer Gober, Staff Planner

1. Meeting Called to Order at 7:00 PM

2. Continued Public Hearings:

a. 344 Pleasant Street – Design and Site Plan Review; Retail Building Greater than 2,500 square feet – Local Business III District

Ms. Allison noted that there were a number of issues to be resolved including environmental, storm water, traffic study issues and a request for a waiver on the sign-by law. She noted that the PB will also need to seek advice from the Town Counsel to resolve questions regarding several of these issues.

MOTION to continue the public hearing to the August 1, 2017 Planning Board meeting was made by Ms. Fiacco and seconded by Mr. Manjikian. Motion passed.

b. 55 Day School Lane – (Belmont Day School) – Design and Site Plan Review for gymnasium building ('the Barn') and site improvements.

[Ms. Allison recused herself from the meeting at 7:05 PM]

Ms. Fiacco reported on the landscape plan working group meeting. She noted that questions were raised at the meeting about which existing trees would remain and which ones would be removed under the proposed landscape plan. The Applicant was asked to clarify the proposed treatment of the existing trees before the public hearing so the PB could assess the proposed landscape plan more easily and have a productive conversation about the plan. Mr. Manjikian reported on the meeting about the construction management plan at which the BDS construction plan was compared to the Cushing Village Construction Management Plan. The comparison identified open questions in the BDS construction plan and the areas for further discussion with the Board.

Katherine Bailey, representing BDS, gave an update on the revised materials that were submitted to the PB since the last meeting. She noted the new updated materials as:

- Typical Hours of Operation report;
- Revised Landscape plan, and;
- Revised Construction Management Plan.

Mr. Largay, Head of BDS, described typical hours of operation during the 2017-2018 school year and during the summer.

Randy Kaplan, Shawmut Construction, reviewed the Construction Management Plan, including access to the site, worker parking (restricted to BDS site), material staging, traffic flow on campus, and parking areas for construction workers and BDS visitors. Mr. Largay reviewed the traffic patterns and traffic lot locations during construction.

Bob Corning, Landscape Architect, reviewed the issues that were discussed in the landscape working group meeting. He displayed a plan that showed what trees were remaining and what trees would be removed. Mr. Haglund asked if there were opportunities to make adjustments to the driveway in order to save additional existing trees. Mr. Corning noted that there is a Norway Maple tree in fair condition, and there is a healthy oak tree that could be saved if five parking spaces were to be removed. Mr. Corning also noted that they could extend the length of the 10' buffer in order to save two more Norway maples if this shift could happen. By increasing the buffer there would be an opportunity to plant a more robust screen along the edge shared with the Highland Meadow Cemetery. Mr. Corning reviewed the lighting plan and noted that it is the absolute minimum in terms of lighting. He noted that with the removal of five parking spots, BDS would still meet the parking requirements.

Comments from the audience:

1. Joel Semuels, 18 Bellevue Road, read his comments and expressed concerns about lots that he purchased in the cemetery. He asked the PB to consider whether it was necessary to have this driveway built. He would consider selling his lots and seeking a refund from the Town. He is also concerned about the 12' lights and the noise from the mechanical pad. He asked that the PB consider the tranquility of the cemetery and to respect the future visitors of the cemetery.
2. Brit Dewey, President of the BDS Trustees, expressed her support of the BDS application and noted that this is a great opportunity for the children. She also noted the many benefits of the project and the numerous good faith attempts to be a good neighbor. She noted that there have been many adjustments to the plan and noted that it was time for the PB to make a decision.
3. Bradley Lewis, Belmont Resident, spoke in support of the project. He noted that it was now time to make a decision to approve the BDS application. He noted that many compromises had been made to meet the requests of the neighbors and the PB. He noted that it was time to stop delaying the process and to approve the application.
4. Don Leavitt, 688 Concord Avenue, explained that the BDS was not in compliance with the American Disabilities Act.
5. Jim Bryant, Belmont Resident, explained his reasons for moving to Belmont. He has

a daughter who attends the BDS and he urged to PB to make the right decision.

6. Kasper Torosian, 659 Belmont Street, reiterate that the Town website says that the PB is to protect and preserve the quality of life that defines Belmont. He read his letter as submitted to the PB. He believed that the buffer should be increased. He would like to see an environmental and wildlife impact study completed. He is certain that flora will be disturbed. He is concerned about the flooding issues on the cemetery and the traffic on the new driveway. He noted that the “barn” should be renamed to better reflect its proposed uses.
7. Alex Corbett, Cemetery Commission, noted that there were no existing flooding issues at the Cemetery. He also noted that a Cemetery Commission member should have been on the landscaping working group. He stated that the deciduous trees will not provide screening in the winter.
8. Daniela Mac, Belmont Resident, has children at the BDS and noted that the noise will be coming from small children and that this will improve their educational opportunities. She asked the PB to consider this as they review the application.
9. Daniel Healy, 67 Concord Avenue, noted that he was concerned about the traffic on Concord Avenue and believed that there are many safety issues. He is concerned about the safety of the children and stated that there should be a speed limit.
10. Dr. Laura Pang, Concord Avenue, noted that the “little school on the hill is too precious”.

Mr. Manjikian noted his concerns about the number of trees removed on the landscape plan and he noted that the visual aesthetic will be greatly disturbed. He suggested that a more robust landscaping plan be provided. Mr. Haglund noted that there was no positive benefit from the 17 spaces that were proposed on the roadway itself and would prefer a plan that did not have them. He noted that the landscape plan had a long way to go and there needs to be a significant investment in landscaping in order to justify the drastic change that will be brought about by putting in the emergency access road.

Mr. Clark noted that as many things as possible need to be done to ameliorate the effect of the road on the Cemetery. The landscaping should make the views of the Cemetery better not worse and he wants to move in that direction. Ms. Fiacco asked the Applicant to provide a 10’ buffer on each side of the access road to provide for a more robust landscaping plan. She noted that it could be possible to eliminate more parking spaces in order to bring in more landscaping. Mr. Largay noted that he would be comfortable removing the 17 parking spaces in order to meet the 10’ buffer request.

Ms. Fiacco asked the Applicant to explain the tricks of the trade with respect to a balance of evergreen and deciduous and how they affect screening. Bob Corning described the intent of the landscape plan was to have a continuation of the existing woodland and natural landscaping that was already there. The most effective screening was a

combination of deciduous and evergreen trees and possibly adding an under-layer story could help the screening as well. Mr. Corning agreed that they would supplement with an under-layer story of deciduous and evergreens to also act as a noise barrier.

Mr. Haglund noted that he has heard from many members of the community that they would prefer the driveway to remain for emergency access only. Mr. Manjikian noted that it would be important to observe the conditions of the storm water system and the impervious surface and to see how the landscaping begins to fill in and to limit the access for emergency only for a year or two. Mr. Clark noted that he didn't think that this would be the best way to test but that it would better to have the traffic actually using the road. He added that it was not clear that putting that road there is going to make traffic worse in the end. Mr. Clark feels that it should not be restricted to an emergency lane. The PB discussed the possibility of imposing a condition for a finite time on the access road. Mr. Wheeler noted that the ZBA has previously instituted a 1, 2 or 3-year review on the granting of various permits and confirmed that it had been done with respect to other projects. Michael Giaimo, representing BDS, noted that this is a Site Plan Review process with a Dover Amendment use and the driveway is part of that use. He noted that they are offering well beyond the By-Law and urged the PB not to impose a restriction on the emergency access road. He noted that this is at the stage of getting close to if not beyond the reasonable regulation as far as a condition of time that is not a proper condition for Site Plan Review approval, which deals with the actual layout of the use.

Mr. Corning explained the proposed buffer and noted that if the parking is eliminated that they could probably increase the buffer to a minimum of 10'. The PB will expect a more fully developed landscape plan with native trees of varying heights with the increased buffer. The PB agreed to review the landscape plan electronically on Monday morning. The Applicant agreed to send the revised plan to Mr. Gober and to Mr. Wheeler and then it will be forwarded to Ms. Fiocco and Mr. Haglund.

Mr. Manjikian noted that the work hours allowed by the by-law allows for work on Sunday. Randy Kaplan, Shawmut Construction noted that it is possible but unlikely that there could be work on Sunday between the allowed hours of 8AM - 5 PM. Ms. Fiocco asked to keep communication open with the Cemetery Commission regarding services that might take place during construction.

MOTION to continue to August 1, 2017 was made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Manjikian. Motion passed.

3. Adjournment 9:00 PM